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THE
COMPLETION
OF
TWO CENTURIES;

A DISCOURSE PREACHED IN FAIRFIELD

ON
THANKSGIVING DAY,

NOVEMBER 28, 1839.

BY
LYMAN H. ATWATER,
"

PASTOR OF THE FIRST CHURCH IN FAIRFIELD.

[PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.]

STANDARD OFFICE,

BRIDGEPORT, CONN.

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1839.

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SERMON.

PSALM LXXVIII. 4.

We will not hide them from their children, showing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.

In this passage and the context the Psalmist announces his purpose to narrate the dealings of God with his people, in the varied vicissitudes through which they had been borne by his wonder-working providence and grace. He thus indicates the importance of 'not hiding,' or of rescuing from concealment and oblivion the important events in the past history of a people, that they may stand forth as beacons for the guidance of present and future generations. He says, 'I will utter dark sayings of old, which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us, * * * that the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born, who should arise and declare them to their children; that they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments.'

The 'wonderful works' of God adverted to in the text, he proceeds to narrate in the subsequent part of the Psalm. They consist of his marvellous allotments to his ancient covenant people, appearing in alternate calamitous judgments and gracious deliverances, as it became needful, to abase their pride, scourge their lusts, and punish their unbelief, or to recover them from despair, awaken gratitude, and rekindle faith in the goodness and veracity of a covenant God. The deliverance out of the land of Egypt and the house of bondage, the forty years migration in the wilderness, the drying of the Red Sea, the cloud by day and the pillar of fire by night, the dropping of manna from Heaven, the gushing forth of water from the smitten rock, with other signal interpositions of God, natural and supernatural, by which the nation had been preserved; these according to the Psalmist ought to be heralded and blazoned before their posterity. Thus, and thus alone, would they know to what Being they owed their distinguished benefits, by what methods he conveyed and secured them to their possession; to whose favor they must look for future preservation and prosperity; and by what means that favor could be propitiated.

Of the salutary influence of such a retrospect of the past histo-

ry of a people of noble origin, there can be no doubt. It tends to suffocate pride and nourish humility ; to inspire a generous reverence and healthful emulation of ancestry ; to awaken a lively spirit of gratitude to and dependence upon the giver of all good : to allay despondency and kindle salubrious hope : in fine, to instruct, admonish and comfort us in the path of duty and the cause of God and truth.

The present year completes two hundred since this town was settled. In accordance with the spirit of these introductory observations, it was my intention to have prepared and delivered on some fit occasion, an historical discourse, containing an accurate account of all important and interesting events pertaining to the town, which have occurred from its settlement until the present time. But this design has been frustrated by various causes.— Without obtruding upon your attention those of a more immediately personal nature, it is enough to say that it is doubtful whether any town or parish of such antiquity and respectability as this, is afflicted with such a paucity of materials, out of which any history at all accurate, authentic and complete can be gathered.— The town records do not begin until some years subsequent to its settlement, of which they give no account : and as they relate almost entirely to conveyances of property and ordinary town business, but little can be gleaned from them respecting affairs of any public interest, during the first century of the town's existence. The parish and church records extend but a little more than a century back, and to a great extent, discover the same poverty, as regards any important historical facts. There are no historical discourses or century sermons extant, if any were ever published, such as are found in most towns, prepared by men living in the midst of the events they narrated, or in sufficiently close neighborhood to them, to authenticate them by satisfactory evidence. The traditions current among our elderly people are scanty and obscure, in regard to affairs prior to the revolutionary war. The materials for such a history therefore, if they exist, are so remote, scattered, buried in the recesses of antiquarian libraries, or under an immense mass of state papers, as to be inaccessible without a greater expenditure of time, money and labor, than I could reasonably afford. And it is doubtful whether the most enthusiastic antiquarian, after exploring all the sombre repositories of antiquarian lore, would so far as the early history of this town is concerned, gain much beside his labor for his pains.

While on these accounts therefore, I have abandoned my first intention, of preparing an historical narrative of this town or parish, it has nevertheless seemed to me that so interesting a year as that which winds up the great cycle of two centuries in the existence of a town, ought not to pass away without any such public

notice or recognition, as will remind the people generally of the fact. And as this great cycle of history has been prolific of events, demanding our most fervent gratitude to the great Ruler of Nations and arbiter of their destinies ; events in consequence of which we are permitted to enjoy this sacred festivity, and meet in this sanctuary of our fathers to offer up to the Giver of all good our sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving ; it behooves us to make it the subject of grateful meditation : and to this end your attention is called for a short time, not to an elaborate address specially prepared for a great occasion, but to a few things put together during the time and in the way of an ordinary preparation for the pulpit.

America was discovered by Columbus, Oct. 12, 1492. After he communicated the intelligence to the Old World, it was more fully explored by the Cabots and others, who first discovered N. America. New England was first discovered in the year 1602.—In England there was a large body of people styled Puritans, because they contended for what they deemed greater purity of doctrine and worship, than then characterized the Church of England. They believed many of its rites and ceremonies to be unscriptural, and that it needed a still further reformation, before it could attain the simplicity and purity of the Scriptural Platform. Their doctrine, order and worship were substantially what we now adopt, for we have inherited them with little alteration. In that age, the great principle of toleration in religious differences was but little known. So much of the spirit and habits of Popery yet remained, that in the Reformed Churches it was the custom to wield the civil power for the purpose of suppressing all dissensions from the belief of the dominant party. The dissenters from the established Church in England were subjected to innumerable persecutions, cruelties and civil disabilities, and this persecuting spirit proceeded with such violence that two thousand of the most pious, learned and orthodox ministers of the realm were at last ejected from their livings, at one fell swoop, because they would not conform to the canons and ceremonies of the Church. The Puritans deemed themselves to dissent from the established Church, only so far as that was dissentient from the law of Christ, who in their view was sole and supreme Lord of the conscience and to whom they felt bound to render allegiance, at whatever risk of exciting the wrath and cruelty of earthly Potentates. Thus harassed in their own country, in the practice of what they believed to be the true and uncorrupted worship of God, they sought an asylum from their troubles on other shores. A company of them first fled to Leyden in Holland, a portion of whom came over to New England, and effected the first permanent settlement of civilized men here. They landed in the year 1620, and named their settlement New Plymouth. The dangers and suffer-

ings encountered by them almost stagger belief. They faced the horrors of an untried ocean, and of a howling wilderness, the home only of savages and ferocious beasts, rather than abide in pleasant homes, at the cost of being molested, if nothing worse, in enjoying for themselves, and transmitting to posterity, a pure religion.

After this asylum of liberty of conscience had once been opened, it attracted the attention of the whole Puritan people in England, as the best refuge from their tribulations. They speedily came over in great numbers. Salem and Charlestown, Mass. were settled in 1629. Boston, Roxbury, Watertown, Medford, Weymouth and Dorchester, were settled the next year. Thus a few years witnessed a thick cluster of settlements springing up to cheer and strengthen the lonely company who first planted themselves on Plymouth's bleak rock.

Soon however Connecticut river, with the innumerable fish it embosomed, its navigable qualities, its noble scenery and rich alluvial flats attracted the notice of the settlers. In a few years, some of the towns first settled in Massachusetts became so densely populated that there was not land enough to accommodate all the inhabitants. A portion of the people in Dorchester, Newtown and Watertown resolved therefore to locate themselves in Connecticut. In the summer of 1635, they sent forward pioneers to explore and make a preliminary settlement. The next year, Hartford, Windsor and Wethersfield were regularly settled and organized, by the immigration of ministers, public officers and other leading men, some of whom were stars of no secondary magnitude. Hooker, Stone, Warham, Haynes, Ludlow, will adorn New England's history, as long as it shall be preserved. Meanwhile the precaution had been taken to fortify themselves against hostile incursions from the Dutch and others, by a fort at the mouth of Connecticut River within the present town of Saybrook. These towns were greatly annoyed by the hostilities of the Pequot Indians. They found that no peace or security could be hoped for, until the tribe was subdued. In conjunction with forces volunteered from the other colonies, they succeeded in vanquishing them. They pursued them from place to place until they surrounded them in the Saco swamp in this town, and forced them to surrender. Thus the tract of coast stretching from this place to Saybrook was explored and began to attract attention.

Early in the spring of 1638, a company of high character headed by Rev. John Davenport, immigrated to this country from England. They wished to form a community or state by themselves, that they might conform not only the church, but the structure of civil government, to the model of the inspired Word. Hearing of the attractive features of this section of country, they

selected New Haven as their location, and organized there an ecclesiastical and civil constitution in accordance with their peculiar views. In 1639, settlements were made at Milford and Guilford on the same plan of civil and ecclesiastical polity as that of N. Haven, and as branches of that colony.

The same year, says Trumbull, 'Mr. Ludlow, who went with the troops in pursuit of the Pequots to Sasco, the great swamp in Fairfield, was so pleased with that fine tract of country, that he soon projected the scheme of a settlement in that part of the colony. This year, he, with a number of others, began a plantation at Unquowa, which was the Indian name of the town. At first there were but about eight or ten families. These probably, removed from Windsor with Mr. Ludlow, the first principal planter. Very soon after, another company came from Watertown and united with Mr. Ludlow, and the people from Windsor. A third company removed into the plantation from Concord—so that the inhabitants soon became numerous, and formed themselves into a distinct township under the jurisdiction of Connecticut. The first adventurers purchased a large tract of land, of the natives, and soon after Connecticut obtained charter privileges, the general assembly gave them a patent. The township comprises the four parishes, Fairfield, Greens Farms, Greenfield, Reading—and part of the parish of Stratfield.* The lands in this tract are excellent and at an early period the town became wealthy and respectable.' This is all that can be found in Trumbull concerning the original settlement. Hence it appears that this town was settled within three years after the first civilized settlements in the state: when there were not as yet a half-dozen communities planted: and that its settlers were from among that conscientious and intrepid body of man, who first exiled themselves into this wilderness as a refuge from persecution. It was settled in less than ten years after the towns from which its settlers emigrated had been first occupied by emigrants from England: and unquestionably by the very men who originally came from the mother country. Unquestionably too, they were among the more resolute and intrepid of them. No others after having once effected a comfortable settlement, would be inclined to encounter the hardships of a second migration, and subduing of an untamed forest. The first settlers here, Mr. Ludlow and his company, had located twice before, first at Dorchester, Mass. in 1630, then at Windsor in this State in 1636, whence they removed to this place. It is stated that the sufferings of the first emigrants from Massachusetts to Connecticut beggar description. They journeyed with their families, cattle and effects through a vast trackless wilderness, with no manner of shelter, environed

* Now Bridgeport.

with hordes of savage beasts and more savage men ; 'their path continually intersected by swamps and streams, which nothing, but the most indomitable courage and fortitude could surmount. After their arrival, they were overtaken with a famine which reduced them to the very verge of death by starvation, in the depths of an unusually severe and protracted winter. Some were obliged to flee back to their former abodes, and others to live on acorns and roots to preserve life. At such sacrifices was it, that this then black forest, was by degrees transformed into those opulent, tasteful, and happy villages, whose comfort we now enjoy, and whose celebrity has gone the circuit of the earth.

A few words concerning this Mr. Ludlow, who was one of the master-spirits among the original Pilgrims, and was unquestionably the presiding genius of this town, for many years after its first settlement. He left the town and went to Virginia in 1654. So far as now appears, he was second to no man in the colonies in jurisprudence and statesmanship. He was leader of a distinguished company that came over under the celebrated Mr. Warham as their Minister, and settled in Dorchester, Mass., whence they both came to Windsor, Ct. While in Massachusetts, he was first appointed Magistrate, and then Deputy Governor of that colony. He was either Magistrate or Deputy Governor of Connecticut, during every year of his residence here. Says Trumbull, 'he rendered most essential services to this Commonwealth—was a principal in forming its civil Constitution ; and the compiler of the first Conn. Code, printed at Cambridge, in 1672.' *

Such is a brief account of the first settlers of Fairfield. They belonged to the company of the Pilgrim Fathers, and had their aims, principles and features of character. The following observations of the venerable historian are therefore justly applicable to them. 'It will ever be the distinguishing glory of these colonies, that they were not originally formed for the purposes of trade or worldly enjoyment ; but for the noble purposes of religion, the enjoyment of liberty of conscience in the worship and ordinances of God. The pious fathers of these colonies wished to enjoy the uncorrupted Gospel, administered in all its ordinances in purity and power ; and to transmit the invaluable blessings of civil and religious liberty to their remotest posterity. With these views they left their native country, their pleasant seats and enjoyments in Europe, and made settlements in the wilds of America.' All conversant with the facts, will confess this tribute just and by no means extravagant. How

* The common report endorsed by Trumbull, that Mr. Ludlow, when he removed from this place, abstracted the town records, is, I think, satisfactorily disproved by Rev. Mr. Davies, in a note in the Appendix to his centennial discourse preached in Green's Farms on the last annual Fast.

glorious that people that can trace itself to such an original ! How illustriously contrasted to the character of the founders of all other nations, who are mostly rude heathens and blood-thirsty warriors. Verily the Lord hath not dealt so with any nations, in giving them pious founders, whose end in instituting them, was solely the benefit of religion, and our distinction in privilege has been answerable to the distinction of our origin.

As regards the secular history of this town I shall say little, because I have little to say. Having been nearly coeval with the first settlement of the country, of course it has sympathized and struggled with it in all general Colonial, State and National measures for the preservation and protection of our rights and liberties from the beginning. I am happy to observe, that from the first, it has exhibited a jealous and sagacious spirit of liberty tempered with a strong reverence for law, and a healthful subordination to the powers that be ; so that we rarely find a more quiet, secure, orderly and law-abiding people, than remains here even to this day. At an early period, Fairfield moved in the General Court for an increase of jurymen from six to twelve.—The motion prevailed, and has been law ever since.

Owing to its peculiar geographical position, this place has been obliged to endure an extraordinary proportion of the expense, privation and misery of the various wars by which our liberties and rights have been purchased, and our property and security protected. For a long period the colonies were vexed with a series of Indian wars, before they could be secure against the merciless incursions of a savage, skulking and vengeful foe. In these, they shared in troubles and trials common to all the colonies, which were neither few nor light. In foreign wars, our naked and defenceless situation on the coast has made us peculiar sufferers. In a few years after the first settlement of New England, our Dutch neighbors were ambitious of gaining possession of the territory, and preventing the advances of the Brittanic sceptre over this continent. They, as was supposed, had well nigh matured a bloody plot with the Indians, for extirpating the English colonies. This county, by its close contiguity to them, suffered most sensibly, under the working of their dreadful machinations. A general determination to make war upon them was aroused in the colonies, which was thwarted only by the refusal of Massachusetts to comply with the decision of the General Commissioners of the Colonies, who were earnest for the war. This frustration of the enterprise greatly exasperated the inhabitants of this county, and especially this town, who without the authority of the State, voted to carry on the war themselves, and enlist volunteers from other towns. They appointed Mr. Ludlow commander-in-chief, and he accepted the office. This was probably a hasty step. The movement was

repressed by the higher authorities as insurrectionary. It is supposed that Mr. Ludlow removed on account of his dissatisfaction with the refusal of the colonies to carry on the war, a measure in which he had been warmly engaged, and the undesirable attitude in which his new and ill-starred office placed him before the people.

Subsequently, the people of this county were long harrassed and exhausted with the tedious French wars, which greatly augmented the burdens and hardships of a young and struggling people.

Then in the war of the Revolution, the sufferings and privations of the people were intense beyond description. Few places bore so large a proportion of the sufferings and sacrifices which finally won liberty and independence for the nation.—They early showed that their hearts were enlisted in the noble cause, by forwarding several hundred bushels of wheat and rye to Boston, the early theatre of the war, for the use of the soldiery. The number in this vicinity, who at this late day draw pensions, shows how extensively the people rallied to arms in their country's cause. This however is but a trifling ingredient in the sacrifices to which they were subjected. The British fleet and army commanded by Gen. Tryon, after plundering New Haven, landed here July 8th 1789. Their approach was so sudden, that no efficacious resistance to their landing could be made. After appalling the body of the people so that they fled away, and rudely plundering whatever they could seize—regardless of rank, age, sex or condition; they in a merciless, savage and inhuman manner, set fire to the dwellings of this beautiful and inoffensive village. It is neither seasonable nor necessary to go into the details of this shocking scene. They are accurately described in a letter written by Mr. Elliott, the then Minister of this people, and published where it is accessible to all.* Suffice it to say, that with the exception of here and there an edifice spared by special favor, the whole village from bridge to bridge was a mass of smoking ruins. Mr. Sayre, the Episcopal clergyman, who was in the British interest, entreated Gen. Tryon first, to spare the town which was denied; then to spare a few dwellings, so that a shelter might be left for the people, which was also denied; he however, finally procured a consent that the houses of worship, also of Rev. Mr. Elliott and the venerable mansion of Thaddeus Burr, Esq., standing on the present site Mr. Jones' house, should be saved from the general conflagration. 'But,' says Mr. Elliott, 'the rear-guard, consisting of banditti the vilest that was ever let loose among men, set fire to every thing which Gen. Tryon had left—the large and elegant meeting house, the Ministers

*See Barber's Historical Collections.

houses, Mr. Burr's, and several others which had received protection !' 85 dwellings, 2 churches, an elegant court-house, 55 barns, 15 stores, 15 shops, with much beside were destroyed.— It was at a season when the wheat harvest had just been stored, and the sufferers were left therefore, not only without a shelter, but without food. Their distress defies description. Conceive some ruthless invader to intrude now, and fire all the edifices of the village : the families have all retreated to yonder heights for safety—mothers with groups of children around, perhaps infants in their arms, look down from their elevation, and behold the heavens illumined by the flames which are consuming their homes, their food, their raiment, and every semblance of a shelter. And all this is aggravated by the all-pervading desolations of a war, which disables their countrymen from ministering any substantial relief. Nay, the same brutal work of destruction is going on apace, with melancholy swiftness in adjacent villages ! Does not the very imagination send through your bosoms a shuddering thrill ? Add to this, the following graphic portraiture from Dr. Dwight's travels. 'While the town was in flames, a thunder-storm overspread the Heavens just as the night came on. The conflagration of near two hundred houses illumined the earth, the skirts of the clouds, and the waves of the Sound, with an union of gloom and grandeur, at once inexpressibly awful and magnificent. The sky speedily was hung with the deepest darkness, wherever the clouds were not tinged by the melancholy lustre of the flames. At intervals the lightnings blazed with a livid and terrible splendor. The thunder rolled above. Beneath the roaring of the fires filled up the intervals, with a deep, hollow sound, which seemed to be the protracted murmur of the thunder reverberated from one end of the Heavens to the other. * * * * It needed no great effort of the imagination to believe that the final day had arrived.' Who, my hearers, can realize the sufferings by which these pleasant and salubrious abodes have been purchased for us ?

Thus houseless and homeless, reduced to poverty and distress, the inhabitants exhausted their resources and contrivance in providing some temporary shelter and means of subsistence for themselves. They converted barns and out-houses into dwellings, or got a temporary lodgement in those fortunate houses which escaped the havoc of the flames. Many of them put up and occupied for years, as their only houses, until they became able to erect convenient dwellings, the buildings which now extensively stand in the rear of our older dwelling houses in the form of small additions. Thus a day reduced an opulent and elegant village to a poverty and insignificance, from which it has but lately fully recovered. Some are now living among us who witnessed and experienced the trials described.

The late war also, as all wars of necessity must, occasioned great distress among this people, on account of their interest in navigation and other causes, so that the return of peace was hailed by a public feast, by bonfires, and illuminations.

Verily then, this village has borne its full quota of the burthens of acquiring and defending our civil liberties and immunities. And considering its extent, it has been distinguished as the abode of a succession of illustrious men, whose sagacity and patriotism have served the interests of the state and nation, as they have in turn adorned and illuminated our halls of legislation, and temples of justice.

But the time urges me to a brief notice of things ecclesiastical. As the end of our forefathers in settling here, was the protection and enjoyment of religion—so we may conclude they would not long remain unprovided with religious teaching and ordinances. Rev. John Jones was the first minister of this Church. He came from England to Concord, Mass., probably in the year 1736. For there is a record there, that he united with Rev. Peter Bulkley and others at that time in forming a Church in that town. He was probably colleague pastor with Mr. Bulkley, which seems to be implied in the following extract from a discourse of the Rev. Mr. Ripley, of Concord, preached Jan. 24th, 1793. ‘Mr. Jones tarried there only two or three years, when he and near half the Church and people finding the place too scanty for the comfortable subsistence of so many, sold their possessions went to Connecticut and settled the town of Fairfield. * From this language I infer that they came here almost simultaneously with Mr. Ludlow and his company, probably by a previous understanding with him; also, that this Church is coeval with the town, and has been blessed with a pastor from the beginning. From the town records it appears that his will was made Jan. 17th, and an inventory of his goods taken Feb. 29th, 1664. His death therefore must have occurred not far from Feb. 1st, 1664. I know of no productions which he has left, or of any other proofs by which we can judge of his comparative merits as a minister. Dr. Trumbull states that he was Episcopally ordained in England. From his bequeathing a set of the Fathers to his Son John Eliphalet; the fact that the ministers who first immigrated to this country, were generally distinguished for piety; and that his son was much sought after by different parishes; it is reasonable to conclude that he was no second-rate man. This son was finally settled at Huntington L. Island, where he enjoyed a long and prosperous ministry.

* This extract, together with the record in Concord, previously mentioned, I take as I find them, in letters from the late Hon. Silas Wood to Dea. Judson whose kindness in giving me access to this correspondence, I hereby acknowledge.

Rev. Samuel Wakeman was called to the pastoral office here by a full vote of the town, Sept. 30th 1665. He accepted the call and remained Pastor till his death, March 8th, 1692, about 26 years. The town in a vote respecting his death, speak of this bereavement as being 'for a lamentation to them.' He was appointed by the General Court, a member of a committee of three, the first committee raised to consider and digest measures for a uniform ecclesiastical constitution which was the first step in the process which ended in the adoption of the Saybrook Platform—a clear proof of the distinguished estimation in which he was held.

In 1669, the town gave Mr. John Eliphalet Jones, son of their first pastor, a call to join Mr. Wakeman as colleague in the ministry. He however declined it. On the 31st of March 1692, they called a Mr. Harreman, and made repeated solicitation to him to become their minister, as far as appears, however, without success.

They then called Mr. Joseph Webb by a vote passed July 26th, on condition that he should satisfy them as to his sentiments regarding baptism. They soon appointed a special committee to enquire of him respecting his practice in this matter. They soon gave him a regular unconditional call, a few only being in the opposition. He was accordingly settled. He remained Pastor till his death in the summer of 1732; a space of about 40 years. He was one of the first fellows of Yale College to whom the charter was given. During his ministry the Saybrook Platform was adopted; and he was evidently regarded as a pillar in the Churches. From the solicitude discovered by the town respecting his practice in the matter of baptism, it is manifest that the half way covenant then had obtained a foothold here.

Rev. Noah Hobart, who had been thought of as a colleague to Mr. Webb in his old age, was called to be his successor in the Pastoral office, by vote of the Society, Oct. 30, 1732. For some years previous the Society had become distinct from the town, in consequence of the formation of other parishes within its limits. In the early records it is always styled the 'Prime Antient Society. Mr. Hobart died December fourth 1773.

He was ordained Feb. 7th, 1733. His ministry therefore lasted about 40 years. He was a man of rare endowments, native and acquired. He was well versed in the learned languages, deeply read in history, philosophy and theology. His preaching was sound, experimental and instructive. He published treatises in regard to several controversies which agitated the Churches. His works now extant prove him to have been among the most eminent divines and powerful controversialists of his time. He was also a Fellow of Yale College.—During his ministry the meeting house was built which was

consumed at the burning of the town. It was probably completed about the year 1750. It stood on the same foundations, and was of the same dimensions, plan and general structure as this edifice, although as I am informed, in somewhat richer style of architecture.

Rev. Andrew Elliott, son of the celebrated Dr. Andrew Elliott, of Boston, was called to succeed Mr. Hobart, by vote, April 4th, 1774, and ordained June 21st. He remained Pastor until his death, which occurred in the latter part of the year 1805. He was a ripe scholar, a prudent, faithful, and beloved Pastor. The general depravation of morals consequent on the revolutionary war, spread its gangrene into a multitude of parishes, rendering them deaf to the remonstrances of ministers, and frustrating the efficacy of their ministrations. This difficulty in all its strength Mr. Elliott was obliged to encounter. The ministers since settled over this people, and dismissed, are now living and active, all filling with honor stations of importance or of distinction. Dr. Humphrey was ordained April 16th, 1807, and dismissed May 15th, 1817. At the beginning of his ministry, the present confession of Faith was adopted, and an end made of the pernicious system of 'owning the covenant,' as it was styled. Dr. Hewitt was installed Jan. 14th, 1818, and dismissed Dec. 31st, 1827. Mr. Hunter accepted his call Dec. 2d, 1828, and proposed a dissolution of the relation Dec. 21st, 1833, which was accordingly accomplished. The present incumbent was installed July 27th, 1835. This sketch of our ecclesiastical affairs, suggests these remarks.

1. This Church and Society have ever been careful to enjoy the labors of a settled Pastor among them. They have suffered no long and gloomy interval to elapse between the loss of one minister and the procurement of a successor. In no instance from the beginning, has the interval much exceeded two years, and ordinarily it has been but a few months. These ministers as a body have been a remarkably able, learned, orthodox, pious and exemplary body of men. Thus the people have shown that they appreciate a settled, solid, evangelical ministry, and lights of distinguished lustre have shone in this candlestick.

2. This Church and Society have through their entire existence been peculiarly blessed with peace, and free from internal and self-destroying dissensions. It is somewhat remarkable that all the Churches of the State which date back as far as this, Hartford, Windsor, Weathersfield, New Haven, Milford and Guilford, have been convulsed with bitter controversies and obstinate feuds, of such power, continuance and influence over other Churches, that Trumbull devotes to each a separate chapter of his History. There are no records or memorials of any incurable difficulties in this Church. It does not appear that the conso-

ciation was ever called, to heal any breach, or adjust any discord. The annals of few parishes present a current of affairs so uniformly peaceful and happy. Long may this be our enviable lot—peace be within our walls and prosperity within our palaces!

3. Few parishes have been more fully preserved in their primitive purity and integrity. Our borders are as little intruded upon by other sects: the primitive doctrine and practice of the Congregational Churches remain with as few changes; the people as a body are as stedfast and unswerving in their attachment to them as is true of almost any community of the descendants of the Puritans. How far this is the fruit of the circumstances mentioned under the two preceding heads, let who so is wise and understands these things, judge. And herein above all, let us with grateful and adoring homage acknowledge the loving kindness of the Lord. We are his people, the sheep of his pasture. He hath made and preserved us, and not we ourselves. Not unto us—not unto us, but unto his great name be the glory.

A few words by way of general conclusion—On a day set apart for thanksgiving and praise, in accordance with a sacred and time-honored custom, and the call of the Chief Magistrate, let us see to it, that we indeed give thanks to the Lord and forget not all his benefits. We are all, by his goodness, partakers of those incomparable civil and religious immunities which distinguish this nation from other nations. We have now reviewed some of the occasions of gratitude which are peculiar to this community. Let us not forget the exuberant fruitfulness which distinguishes the present season. The Lord has crowned the year with goodness—His paths drop plenty. He openeth his hand and filleth the mouth of every living thing. He has kept us at peace with all nations and with ourselves. Let us then enter his gates with joy, and call upon our souls and all that is within us to praise and bless his holy name. Amen.

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